

# Philosophies *at* War



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A R C H B I S H O P  
FULTON J. SHEEN

A handwritten signature in grey ink, reading "Fulton J. Sheen" with a small cross symbol above the first letter of "F".

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Cover image: Intelligence, simplicity, spirituality, humor are all ex-  
pressed in the features of Bishop Fulton Sheen, once described as  
a “priestly-looking Tyrone Power”. (Photo by Bettmann / Getty  
Images).

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*Dedication*

Mariae Gratiae Divinae  
Quae dum creatorem terrae  
Parit in terris incarnatum  
Rerum recreandarum facta est principium  
Hoc qualemcumque est opus  
In eiusdem creatoris honorem exaratum  
Mille beneficiorum memor  
Eiusdem virginis patrocinio  
Dum excogitat dum scribit dum retractat impetratorum  
Dedicat auctor indignus  
Alteri si possit nemini  
Libertiori animo placiturus



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN (1895–1979) was one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century. As the first Catholic televangelist on prime-time television, his program, *Life is Worth Living*, inspired an audience of nearly thirty million people weekly, more listeners than St. Paul ever could have reached during a lifetime of preaching. With his eloquent writing and preaching on television and radio, he movingly and masterfully portrayed life, eternity, love, sorrow, joy, freedom, suffering, marriage, and so much more. His memorable style was distinguished by his booming voice, his Irish wit and wisdom, and his warm smile.

In this carefully selected set of books, Sheen offers clear guidance on the problems affecting all people in today's world, including key ideologies that seek to destroy the Church and society, including Marxism and Freudianism, what is today called "Cultural Marxism." His spiritual and practical wisdom cover a wide variety of subjects that range from discussions of down-to-earth spiritual

and moral problems to provocative conversations on the meaning of life, family, education, Christianity, world affairs, and more. Together they add up to a stirring and challenging statement of Bishop Sheen's whole philosophy of life and living. With ease, Sheen shows the relationship between human reason and religion. He shows that the world of today has reached a point of irrationalism that is in utter contempt of lasting truths. With honesty and capable scholarship, Sheen has something to say for everyone. His works are of immediate concern to all men and women seeking understanding, belief, and purpose in these troubled times.

Bishop Sheen reminds us that if we are to help cure the modern world of pessimism and despair, hatred and confusion, we must enlist as warriors of love and peace. Sheen's daily Holy Hour before the Most Blessed Sacrament was the catalyst behind his preaching and writing but also his great love for the Blessed Mother. She was the woman he loved most, "The World's First Love," in addition to his great love for St. Thérèse, patroness of the foreign missions.

Sheen wrote over seventy books, many of which are still widely read today. When the first nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated in 1930 on NBC, Sheen was chosen as the first preacher. He hosted this nighttime radio program for twenty years from 1930 to 1950 before moving to television where he had his own show on prime-time TV from 1952 to 1957. Sheen twice won an Emmy for Most Outstanding Television Personality and was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. But more important than any earthly awards, Fulton Sheen's tireless evangelization efforts helped convert many to the Faith, especially Communist organizer Bella Dodd.

Entombed in a side altar at the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, Illinois, Sheen's cause for canonization was officially opened in 2002. May readers be inspired by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, a timeless voice described as one of the greatest Catholic philosophers of our age.



## CHAPTER ONE

# War and Revolution

There are two ways of looking at the war: one as a journalist, the other as a theologian. The journalist tells you what happens; the theologian not only why it happens, but also what matters. If we look at this war through the eyes of a journalist or a commentator, it will be only a succession of events without any remote causes in the past, or any great purpose in the future. But if we look at the war through the eyes of God, then the war is not meaningless, though we may not presently understand its details. It may very well be a purposeful purging of the world's evil that the world may have a rebirth of freedom under His Holy Law, for:

Every human path leads on to God,  
He holds a myriad finer threads than gold,  
And strong as holy wishes, drawing us  
With delicate tension upward to Himself.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. C. Stedman, *Protest of Faith*.

Our approach is from the divine point of view, first of all, because it is the only explanation which fits the facts; secondly because the American people who have been confused by catchwords and slogans are seeking an inspiration for a total surrender of their great potentialities for sacrifice, both for God and country.

The great mass of the American people are frankly dissatisfied with the ephemeral and superficial commentaries on what is happening. Being endowed with intelligence, they want to know why it is happening. We all know what we are fighting against; we want to know what we are fighting for. We all know that we are in a war; we want to know what we must do to make a lasting peace. We know whom we hate; but we want to know what we ought to love. We know we are fighting against a barbarism that is intrinsically wicked; we want to know what we have to do to make the resurrection of that wickedness impossible.

It is necessary to clear away three false conceptions of the war by reminding ourselves what this war is not.

This war is not merely a political and an economic struggle, but rather a theological one. It is not political and economic, because politics and economics are concerned only with the means of living. And it is not just the means of living that have gone wrong, but the ends of living. Never before in the history of the world have there been so many abundant means of life. Never before was there so much power, and never before have men so prepared to use that power for the destruction of human life. Never before was there so much material wealth; never before has there been so many means to draw people together through rapid communications and the radio; never before have they been so pulled apart by hate and strife and war.

The means of life no longer minister to peace and order because we have perverted and forgotten the true ends of life. Dynamite can be used as a means to build the foundations of a hospital, or it can be used as a means to destroy the entire hospital. The purpose or the intention for which it is used will determine how the means are used. Now the basic reason why our economics and politics have failed as a means to peace is that both have forgotten the end and purpose of life. We have been living as if civilization, culture and peace were by-products of economic activity, instead of the other way round, so that economics and politics are subordinated to the moral and the spiritual. Politics and economics alone are as incapable of curing our ills as an alcohol rub is incapable of curing cancer; and if we assume they will, then this world war will end in socialism, and socialism is only an obligatory and enforced organization of the means of living to prevent utter ruin. It is not our politics that has soured, nor our economics that have rusted; it is our hearts. We live and act as if God had never made us. That is why this war is not political and economic in its fundamental aspects; it is theological.

This war has not been caused by evil dictators. It is too commonly assumed that our milk of international peace has curdled, because a few wicked dictators poured vinegar into it. Hence if we could rid the world of these evil men, we would return to a world of comparative prosperity where we would have to worry only occasionally about a fellow citizen watering our milk. What a delusion! These dictators are not the creators of the world's evil; they are its creatures; they are only boils on the surface of the world's skin; they come to the surface because there is bad blood beneath. It will do no good to puncture the boils, if we leave the source of the infection. Have we forgotten that

from 1914–1918 our cry was “rid the world of the Kaiser and we will have peace.” Well, we got rid of the Kaiser but we had no peace. On the contrary we prepared for another war in the space of twenty-one years. Now we are shouting, “rid the world of Hitler and we will have peace.” We will not! We must rid the world of Hitler, but we will not have peace unless we supply the moral and spiritual forces, the lack of which produced Hitler. There are a thousand Hitlers hidden under the barbarism of the present day. It is indeed significant that the era between 1918 and 1939 was called only an “Armistice” and such it was, an interlude between wars. Peace does not follow the extermination of dictators, because dictators are only the effects of wrong philosophies of life; they are not the causes. They come into environments already prepared for them, like certain forms of fungi come into wet wood. Nazism is the disease of culture in its most virulent form, and could not have come to power in Germany, unless the rest of the world were already sick. Were we honest we would admit that we are all citizens of an apostate world, a world that has abandoned God. For this apostasy, we are all in part responsible, but no more than we Christians who were meant to be the salt of the earth to prevent its corruption. No! It is not the bad dictators who made the world bad; it is bad thinking. It is, therefore, in the realm of ideas that we will have to restore the world!

This war is not like any other war. When hostilities cease, we will not go back again to our former way of life. This war is not an interruption of the normal; it is rather the disintegration of the abnormal. We are definitely at the end of an era of history. The old wells have run dry; the staff of unlimited progress on which we leaned, has pierced our hands; the quicksands of our belief in the unqualified



goodness of human nature have swallowed the superstructure of our materialistic world. We are now face to face with a fact which some reactionaries still ignore, namely, that society can become inhuman while preserving all the technical and material advantages of a so-called advanced civilization. We will not get back again to the same kind of a world we had before this war, and he who would want to do so, would want the kind of world that produced Hitler. The world is pulling up its tents; humanity is on the march. The old world is dead!

That brings us to what the war is. There are really two great events in the modern world: the war and the revolution.

A war involves nations, alliances, men, armies, defense plants, guns and tanks. A revolution involves ideas. A war moves on a horizontal plane of land, territory and men; a revolution moves on the vertical plane of ideology, doctrine, dogmas, creeds and philosophies of life. This distinction is very important, for it explains how nations can be on the same side of a war and on different sides of a revolution. Russia, for example, is on our side of the war, but Russia is not yet on our side of the revolution; please God some day it may be. The distinction also explains the war between Germany and Russia. Their conflict is not one of ideologies, for Communism and Nazism are both destructive of human freedom. As President Roosevelt said on February 10, 1940: "The Soviet Union, as a matter of practical fact known to you and to all the world, is a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world."

The war is only an episode in the revolution—something incidental. It is the military phase by which the revolution is working itself out. The revolution is far more important and will long outlast the war, for this world war is not a conflict

of nations, as was the last world war, but a conflict of ideologies. It is not so much a struggle between alliances of men, as it is between dogmas and creeds. The battles fought on land and sea and in the air are merely episodes of a greater struggle, which is being waged in the realm of ideas. A far more important question than "Who will win the war?" is the question: "Who will win the revolution?" In other words, what kind of ideologies or philosophies of life will dominate the world, when this war is finished?

A revolution we said involved ideologies, dogmas and creeds. How many philosophies of life are involved in this revolution? It is quite generally and falsely assumed that there are only two: Democracy and the Totalitarianism, or the Christian and the anti-Christian. Would to God it were that simple! There are actually three great philosophies of life or ideologies involved:

First, the Totalitarian which is anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and anti-human.

Secondly, the Secularist world view which is humanistic and democratic, but which attempts to preserve these values on a non-religious and non-moral foundation by identifying morality with self-interest instead of morality with the will of God.

Thirdly, the Christian world view which grounds the human and the democratic values of the Western World on a moral and religious basis. This Christian view includes not only Christians but also Jews, who historically are the roots of the Christian tradition, and who religiously are one with the Christian in the adoration of God and the acceptance of the moral law as the reflection of the Eternal Reason of God.

In the light of these three conflicting philosophies of life our task is three-fold.

This anti-Christian, anti-Jewish and anti-human Totalitarian system must be defeated and crushed not just because it is a political or economic system contrary to ours, but because it is anti-human, and it is anti-human because it is anti-God. Hence our war against it is not in the name of democracy, but in the name of humanity.

We must fearlessly admit that we are not fighting the war to keep everything just as it is, for the materialism, selfishness and godlessness which would eat away the vitals of American traditions, justice and equality we can and should scrap. Then, having recovered our allegiance to God's moral law, we may be worthy of our mission to lead the world to the peace born of the justice and charity of God, for "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it."

This war is incidental to the great decision the world must make: whether man is a tool of the state as Totalitarianism believes; or whether man is an animal as the secularist tradition of the Western World and too many Americans believe; or whether man is a creature made to the image and likeness of God as the Christian believes.

There is the essence of conflict.

We have a double enemy in this war, not a single one. We must defeat the active barbarism from without, and we must defeat the passive barbarism from within. We must use our swords with an outward thrust against Totalitarianism and its hard barbarism; but we must also use the sword with an inward thrust to cut away our own soft barbarism.

In personal language, each of us must say: I must fight the enemy of man, and I must fight myself when I am my own worst enemy. We have a war to win; and we have a revolution to win. A war to win by overthrowing the power

of the enemy in battles and a peace to win by making ourselves worthy to dictate it.

Victory on the field will conquer the hard barbarism. Repentance and catharsis of spirit alone will conquer the soft barbarism. Guns, ships, planes, dynamite, factories, ships and bombs will put down the first evil. Prayer, sorrow, contrition, purging of our hearts and souls, meditation, reparation, sacrifice and a return to God will alone accomplish the second. If we merely defeat the hard barbarism and lose to the soft, we will be at the beginning of cyclic wars, which will return and return until we are beaten and purged and broken in the creative despair of getting back to God.

This is the true revolution. All the other revolutions of the twentieth century have been from without; this time we want a revolution from within. The revolutions which shook Europe during the last twenty-five years only shifted power from one class to another, and booty from one pocket to another, and authority from one party to another. This time we want a revolution that will change hearts! A revolution like the one pictured in "The Magnificat" which was a thousand times more revolutionary than the Manifesto of Karl Marx in 1848. The trouble with all political and economic revolutions is they are not revolutionary enough! They still leave hate in the heart of man!